

# GOLDFINCH

**Celebrating 25 Issues**



**Literary Journal of Women Who Write, Inc.**  
**Volume 25, 2022-2023**



## **Goldfinch**

The Literary Journal of Women Who Write, Inc.

Volume 25, 2022-2023

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## Beyond the Canvas

Carole Garibaldi Rogers

She is not looking at me. Under her low-brimmed hat, her eyes are cast down. She sits alone at a round white table in the corner of a restaurant. The title of the familiar Edward Hopper painting tells more: “Automat.” But it does not capture how the painting speaks to my memories.

Painted in 1927, in the popular days of automats, the scene is set long before my years as a young adult in New York City. I remember automats from my childhood, but then there was always someone guiding my hand as I inserted nickels into a slot and opened a little glass door to take out my slice of apple pie. And there were always people at my table. My mother and father. An aunt. A cousin.

The woman sitting alone speaks to another era of my life. There were many years when I lived in East Side apartments, walked to a job I loved and had plenty of friends, eventually a husband, but still sat alone for endless cups of coffee. I drank mine at the counters of a Chock Full o’Nuts, which was in some ways the successor to the Automat. No slices of apple pie waited behind little doors, but there were iconic cream cheese sandwiches on date nut bread, served on tiny sheets of waxed paper. The coffee was always hot and served in heavy white mugs.

I spent many hours at those counters. I was alone. Was I lonely? Disconnected? As an only child, I had become accustomed to aloneness. I stare at the girl in “The Automat” and I see something different than some art critics who see the embodiment of modern estrangement. Then I look around at the others with me in the gallery and wonder: Are we, as Hopper seems to say, each alone, disconnected, immersed in our own lives?

Perhaps it is the aloofness of Hopper’s paintings, stripped of personal emotion, where geometrics of light are more eloquent than a body or a face, that gives me permission to see more than what is on the canvas. Walking through the exhibition at the

## Beyond the Canvas (cont'd)

Carole Garibaldi Rogers

Whitney Museum of American Art, I find myself repeatedly flung back in time to my New York. The paintings flatten not just space, but also time.

Hopper is famous for his rooftops. Some tease with just the view from the sidewalk; others we glimpse from a nearby bridge. The one that enlivens my memories is “City Roofs.” In this painting, we are there on the rooftop, seeing the rows of chimneys receding into the horizon, a taller building looming just in front of us, the interplay of light and shadow dividing the canvas into a collection of rectangles. Vintage Hopper; vintage New York City from the thirties.

My rooftop memories, from the seventies, are softer. When we were first married, my husband and I lived on the fourteenth floor of a faded Art Deco building on East Twenty-Second Street, between Second and Third Avenues. After work, we would meet in our tiny kitchen, assemble some snacks, pack up a portable bar with the ingredients for his martini and my gimlet and take the elevator to the rooftop.

Years before we had moved in, the management had removed all the old claw-foot bathtubs and transported many of them up to the roof where they lined them up, separated by a grid of walkways, and then filled them each summer with plantings of marigolds and zinnias.

We were the beneficiaries. We would wend our way between the bathtubs, choosing a view north or west or east, claim two metal folding chairs, and relax into the evening. Yes, as we looked out over the city, we saw wooden water towers, drab chimneys, and the edges of other apartment buildings sliced by light into Hopper-like geometrics. But my rooftop memories will forever have a brighter palette.

## Beyond the Canvas (cont'd)

Carole Garibaldi Rogers

As I move through crowded galleries, generations elide. I am revisiting not only my own time in New York, but I find myself trying once again to peer into my grandmothers' lives.

Hopper cherished views into windows. He wanted to capture both the interior and exterior of a building and as he walked the sidewalks or took the elevated around the city, windows became his entry point. They were my entry point, too, into the lives of three immigrant women, one Jewish, one German, one Italian, all trying to carve a new life for their families in gritty neighborhoods of New York.

Only late in my life did I begin to learn details about these three women, all my grandmothers. As I sought entry into their lives, lives hidden from me, I, too, stood on sidewalks and looked in, trying to reconstruct what was happening in the rooms inside.

Sometimes I was on Orchard Street, across from 36, staring at the fire escapes that rose four floors and partially obscured the center windows. There, I envisioned my Jewish grandmother, Minnie Seidman, holding her newborn, my mother, and watching the scenes in the street below. Night faded into early morning, the crowds gathered to buy and sell at the markets below, and she struggled to face another day amidst dirt and heat and noise. The windows could not tell me when or how she died or why her newborn daughter was soon transported from the Lower East Side to the Bronx.

On other days, I lingered on First Avenue, between Ninety-First and Ninety-Second Streets, peering into the windows of 1775. When Margaretha Hoefel, my adoptive grandmother, lived here in 1900, she was in the midst of *Kleindeutschland*. But no lively German atmosphere remained in the neighborhood when I visited. Like Hopper, I erased high-rise apartment buildings and skyscrapers from my view, but the windows at 1775 remained opaque. I had to dig deep into my imagination to summon this grandmother,

## **Beyond the Canvas (cont'd)**

Carole Garibaldi Rogers

the German Catholic widow who would bravely adopt my mother, a Jewish baby from Orchard Street, and die a few years before I was born.

One of the few ways I could encounter my third grandmother, my father's mother, was by standing in front of 421 West Forty-fifth Street, the last of her several homes within the boundaries of the notorious neighborhood called Hell's Kitchen. Catherine Garibaldi had seven children by the time the family lived here. These windows, like the front steps, iron railing, and brick facade, look solid. But this grandmother's life was far from sturdy. Mental illness loomed over her even while she lived here. These windows do not lead me to calm interior spaces. My father and his siblings moved on to happier places; Catherine did not.

Paintings capture a moment; they speak of the transitory nature of our lives. Our challenge is to see beyond what the artist places before us. We are the ones who can provide a before and an after. How are we changed by what we see? Hopper's paintings set a stage. It is my grandmothers, my parents, and I who fill the scenes in my mind, living lives forward as best we can.

## Songs My Mother Taught Me

Joan G. Reamer

The living room was dominated by the presence  
the old upright piano, drawing immediate attention,  
like the woman who played it, the heart of the home.

lying on the living room floor  
listening to her mother play, the child  
learned to love the music

on this new Yamaha, resting over the eighty-eight,  
there lies open "Let Us Have Music for Piano"  
*Moonlight Sonata* dated the year it was learned, 1957

playing now with ease those same chords  
that a child's hands once had such difficulty reaching  
the daughter knows how much more than music her mother  
taught her

Chopin's *Polonaise*, a story of national pride  
*Ave Maria*, a prayer  
*The Man I Love*, a tale of longing

then and now *September Song*, a reminder of life's brevity  
a gift lies in each piece, each one a part of her  
that speaks with every new rendition.

## Shaina Maideleh

Bari Ecker

As my grandfather's foot  
worked the pedal of his sewing machine,  
clumps of dust scattered on the floor like frightened mice.  
His fleshy long earlobes made me think  
of "Horton Hears a Who,"  
while a Parkinsonian mask had already stolen his smile.  
He slumped forward, peering over spectacles  
at the rumpled fabric  
being drawn beneath the undulating needle.  
Spools of thread hung on pegs from the wall  
like hollow ice cream cones  
in rainbow colors.  
I imagined  
that if I unwound the threads from each of those spools  
and placed them end to end upon the earth,  
they might reach all the way to Poland  
where my grandfather,  
at age nineteen,  
had left his parents and six brothers and sisters  
to begin a new life.  
The thread would snap apart at Auschwitz.  
I sat beside him,  
sinking my fingers into a shoebox filled with buttons,  
but seeing  
a pirate's chest of golden coins.  
My shaina maideleh,  
he called me,  
and gave me the cloth from two cut hems  
along with a violet-threaded needle.

## A New Verse

Kathy Kane

Sadie paused on the trail, resting against a tree. She closed her eyes as she considered the events of the day. How tenuous life was and how it could change in the blink of an eye. Like starting down a flight of stairs and missing a step. You might catch yourself or take a tumble. Like the split-second decision to take a different route to work. You could avoid the three-car pileup or be one of the cars. Like letting things stay lost or turning around and retracing your steps.

Sadie was retracing her steps. She had lost her wedding ring earlier in the day somewhere along this path. She knew the loss would not be received well by her husband, Sam. He thought she was flighty and irresponsible and this would play right into that belief. Lately, he'd been treating her as a child who needed a scolding. It used to be whimsical Sadie and serious Sam. They knew who they were and it worked for a while until the attraction of opposites gradually wore off over the six years of their marriage.

They'd had a huge argument that morning. One more in a string of escalating fights. Things were said that would be hard to unsay. Unsaid things hung in the air of the cramped rooms. Words that if spoken could never be unspoken.

No, things were not good at home. It occurred to her that the loss of the ring might carry a more ominous meaning besides cold, ungloved fingers and having dropped ten pounds over the last few months from all the stress. Baby hopes repeatedly dashed, careers upended, money worries, parents sick and dying.

Yet, with everything going on, she still put the ring on each morning. It felt hopeful; it was a symbol of their connection; however shaky that was.

She sighed as she pushed herself off the trunk of the tree and turned back onto the trail. Head down, she retraced her steps once again. The watery winter sun strained through the pine trees. Her

## A New Verse (cont'd)

Kathy Kane

eyes strained for a glint of gold among the pine needles and forest floor debris.

She had fled the apartment that morning as soon as Sam left for work. She stayed in the bathroom until she heard the door close then threw some clothes in a bag and drove the ninety minutes to the cottage. These woods, this cottage, had been her favorite place in the world since she was a child. It had been her grandparents', then her parents' and now hers. Even now, in the middle of January, with the community empty except for her, it had the ability to soothe her. Not completely, however, as she found herself grumbling how Sam would never get this place if they split up. A gurgle of meanness rose up in her.

Her sneakered feet beat a quiet cadence over the soft forest floor; her back bowed over each glimmer of light on the ground. In the quiet of the winter woods, it gradually became clear to her that she didn't want those unsaid things to be spoken. Their only purpose would be to wound. She didn't want that or the finality they could bring. She wasn't ready for the end of their story, the coda.

She actually wanted a rewrite, some new verses. Yes, maybe even a new song. Different melody; different rhythm. She was sure if she could find the ring, she'd get another chance at this.

"Sadie!"

She jumped up, startled. Sam's voice rang out again. "Sadie! Over here!"

She stood frozen in place. "How did you find me?"

"You weren't at the cottage. I tracked your phone."

"You were heading for work when I left. Why are you here?"

Neither of them moved, eying each other warily. Sparring partners waiting for a bell.

## A New Verse (cont'd)

Kathy Kane

“I went home to see if we could work something out. That was a bad one this morning. We can't keep going on like this. I don't want to lose you.”

Then her tears came.

She blubbered about rings and ruts; old songs and new songs. Until he had no choice but to laugh. His smile was like the sun breaking through the dense canopy above.

“Yes,” he said, slowly closing the gap between them. “I could go for new. Come on, I'll help you find your ring first.”

She wiped the tears from her face and stood still, letting him come to her side. She turned and led him along the trail as together they retraced her earlier steps and looked for the ring.

## In the morning

Laura Daniels

a shadow of illumination slivers  
through the left corner of my blackout shades  
what the heck—it can't be morning already  
further investigation is needed

I tunnel out of my quilted cocoon  
my eyes unhinge—always a good thing  
oh, yeah, morning has indeed erupted

I lift my head like a slow-moving crane  
probing for the green numbers—  
7:12—not feeling that number—gonna have to do better

okay—let the game begin—  
What *is* an appealing time to leave my berth  
and venture into the latrine?

7:17—a balanced number—still too soon  
7:20—a tiny round orb—too early for philosophy  
7:25—two plus five—math is fun, but not yet

I finally settle on 7:30 as today's launching interval  
and wait patiently for the clock to catch up  
if I miss it, there's always 7:33—I do love a double-digit

# Fair Warning

Doris Parmett

If you are the type of person whose house glistens on the inside and out, then don't bother to read this!

If you enthusiastically decluttered your house prior to having a realtor's open house, then don't bother to read this!

If your lawn doesn't need seeding, or any bush, tree, or flower garden doesn't need attention, then don't bother to read this!

If both your basement and garage are clean and organized, then don't bother to read this!

If you have stainless steel appliances and there's not even the slightest fingerprint on any of them, then don't bother to read this!

If you willingly hide all family pictures when you put your house up for sale, then absolutely, positively don't bother to read this!

**FAIR WARNING!**

My name is Dolores Mason. I speak from a lifetime of experience. We could never be friends.

Back to my major problem. **DECLUTTERING!** Twelve alphabetic letters of pure frustration. Don't get me wrong. I prefer cleanliness. I also like a neat house. I'm not a slob. However, if truth be told, pristine perfection doesn't rule my life. When I awake in the morning, I open my eyes and wish for peace, health, and safety for everyone. I never awake anxiously chomping at the bit to declutter.

My life habits are simple. I try to stay healthy. I have friends. I'm active. I try to help others. That pretty much sums up my mantra. So why am I faced with a life-altering problem?

It all started a few weeks ago when my son, Randy, urged me to move to Florida to be near family now that I am widowed. This turned out to be a major decision for me to make. Do I stay? Or

## Fair Warning (cont'd)

Doris Parmett

do I want to be near family? The answer is yes. I want to be near family. Acting on the decision is becoming a horrendous amount of work. Why?

FAIR WARNING: I contacted a real estate company.

FYI, I'll give you a visual of what they will see. I live in a ranch house on a cul-de-sac. There's an attached oversized, two-car garage with room for an upright freezer. I also keep an old refrigerator my father gave us as a wedding present. It still works. I used to store extra food in it when we had big parties. Now I mainly use it unplugged for extra storage. The door leading from the garage brings you into the laundry room. It has heated floors. So does my basement. They were there when we bought the house. The laundry room leads into the kitchen which overlooks the den and fenced-in backyard. The living room and dining room face the front. The guest clothes closet, guest bathroom, linen closet, and bedrooms are down the hall. Thirty years ago, my late husband and I chose this town because of the good schools and nearby train station.

A day after I contacted a real estate company, a parade of cars lined the curb. Multiple uncalled realtors arrived in droves. They came inside to inspect.

You would think my home is good enough to start showing. Apparently not. Not until I do a major decluttering both inside and out. One realtor handed me several printed sheets of paper filled with decluttering suggestions.

After they left, I began reading the first page. "Start in the kitchen with the spice rack. Get rid of any outdated spices." I don't have a spice rack. I have a cabinet with three shelves of spices. I remove every spice and read the use by dates. I toss most of mine in the garbage.

Do I feel better after my first decluttering experience? Not really.

## Fair Warning (cont'd)

Doris Parmett

The next declutter manifesto orders me to remove all appliances from my marble-topped kitchen counter, then shine, shine, shine. I check the cabinet beneath the sink. I'm out of cleaning supplies. That's easily fixed. Nevertheless, I'm in a quandary. Where am I supposed to put my toaster, coffee maker, new Hamilton Beach food blender, all-in-one cheese grater, and mandolin slicer, plus my set of Farberware kitchen knives? A visual sweep of my kitchen closet provides the answer.

Nowhere.

Hopefully, a potential buyer could conclude after seeing all my appliances that a terrific chef must live here.

They should only know I keep a bunch of restaurant menus. Depending on my day's fancy, I often order in Chinese, Mexican, Italian, American, Indian, or whatever country's specialty raises my salivation quota.

I'm not entirely useless. I did wipe my stove top and the hood above the stove.

Next on the declutter list printed in large, black, bold print are the words **PERSONAL PHOTOGRAPHS OUT**. Buyers need to see their own families in the space, not yours. I wonder whether any of the realtors counted the seventeen framed family pictures on the refectory table in the foyer adjacent to the front door.

Did I mention I'm a professional photographer by trade? I am. Have camera, will travel. Trying to obey the latest command, I start walking through every room with a critical eye hunting for more pictures. What do I see? My eyes focus fondly on a feast of family photos. I gather an armful of precious memories and head to the side tables on either side of the living room couch. I drop the pictures onto the comfy pillows while I pull open each table's front drawer. Why am I not surprised? Both drawers are filled with pictures and new picture frames I bought at the Dollar Tree store. My next action becomes logically simple. I return every picture from whence it came.

## Fair Warning (cont'd)

Doris Parmett

Whenever I'm frustrated or bored I eat dark chocolate. Needing emotional sustenance, I sit down and thoroughly enjoy two pieces. I also turn on my television to watch a segment of a show on HGTV featuring a company staging a house to show. This gets me thinking about a friend of mine who paid over \$5,000 to hire one of those companies. Money doesn't grow on trees, so I put that option in the back of my mind. I grab another piece of chocolate after realizing that even agreeing to pay to have a house staged for sale, the homeowner still has to decide what to keep, donate, or toss.

I switch off the TV and head to my bedroom with its en suite. The declutter list clearly states that closets, especially a bedroom clothes closet, must look spacious. I take one look at mine.

I admit it. Mine looks like it had been hit with an F2 tornado.

On a rampage of resignation, I toss dresses, skirts, blouses, slacks, vests, belts, purses, scarves onto my California King-sized bed. I empty shelves on each side of the closet. Shelves are filled to the ceiling with some summer clothes plus sweaters and sweat-shirts. Next I free the floor of shoe racks. Every last item is gone! Where? The clothes are on my bed. The shoe racks are in front of my bed. That's where.

I ask myself how much of this stuff can I shove into one or two long, plastic containers to hide under my bed. Do I own long, plastic containers? No. Nor do I have boxes that would fit beneath my bed. I stare at the mess on my bed. There is only one logical solution to my latest problem. I put everything back in the closet. Forget the en suite, I need more chocolate.

I march into a second bedroom that I converted to an office. I check the crowded bookshelves, the long counter holding more pictures, the cabinets below the counter, plus a desktop computer, a laptop, an iPad, a printer, and a metal file cabinet. In short order, I leave and open a new box of chocolate.

## Fair Warning (cont'd)

Doris Parmett

Licking the last of a piece of yummy dark chocolate with almonds, I bypass the linen closet and head for the guest bathroom. Dare I tell you why I have eight jars of Albolene under the sink? When I learned the store I always purchase the makeup remover from was due to close, I stocked up. I now own enough Albolene to last me who knows how long.

Oh, and I forgot to mention that as the last realtor left, she advised me to repaint my porch bench. “Keep the blue. It’s less work. Your front door could use it too.”

“That’s what you think,” I wanted to shout.

Now thoroughly discouraged, I make myself a cup of green tea with pomegranate. Yes, I have more chocolate. Can you blame me? As I sip my tea I realize that if I don’t stop eating so much chocolate I will surely gain a lot of weight, not to mention possibly getting diabetes.

FAIR WARNING! Desperation calls for a brilliant solution. I figure out a way to stay healthy and to avoid the agony of DE-CLUTTERING! Grabbing my cell phone, I punch in my son’s number. After the hellos and I’m fine, I get down to the reason for the call.

“Randy, sweetie, I’m at a crossroad. You’re aware that I’m leaving everything to you and yours.”

“Mom, are you sure you’re all right?” He sounds worried.

“Perfect; however, I have a small problem. No, it’s not medical. We’ve talked about my moving to Florida. I’ve told you that I intend to rent a furnished place so I can first get the lay of the land. Realtors say I have to declutter before I can sell this house. It’s too much.”

“How can I help?”

## Fair Warning (cont'd)

Doris Parmett

“You’re such a dear. Okay, I’ve decided to hire a trucking company to drive everything to Florida. This way you and your lovely wife and son can choose what to keep, donate, or give away.”

I hear him clear his throat. “You’re serious?”

“Yes, sweetheart.”

“You want us to do the decluttering?”

He doesn’t sound enthused, so I pile it on. “I’ll help. I’ll keep my photography equipment and anything else I might need. Please, take whatever you want. You’re getting it anyway so why not enjoy it now. Why wait until I’m dead?”

His sigh of acquiescence comes across with a semi-reluctant agreement to declutter.

To which I reply with a resounding thanks, followed by: “FAIR WARNING: I know it’s time-consuming and a lot of work. All I ask is that after you remember the hours you spent decluttering for me, that one day in the distant future when it’s time for me to leave and join your father, I’m hoping that you write on my gravestone: WE LOVED HER ANYWAY!”

# Jigsaw Therapy

Vivian Fransen

*Things have a way of falling to pieces . . .  
Nothing is exempt, not even our ideas.*  
—Thomas Howard<sup>1</sup>

We found two unopened puzzles  
in the attic  
with a thousand or more interlocking pieces  
often oddly shaped.

“Let’s crack one open,” I say.  
A welcome distraction  
something doable  
within our control.

We sort out the pieces with straight edges to form the borders  
then move on to distinctive features with vivid colors  
—faces, body parts, a bridge, a tree, a train—  
and save all those blue pieces (for sky or water) for last.

Side by side  
we work our way  
through the maze  
by trial and error.  
I squeal with delight  
when the pieces fit.  
You sometimes sigh and walk away.  
We endure moments of frustration  
overwhelmed by the task  
yet certain we’ll see it through.

We do most of our puzzling in silence  
while assorted thoughts  
about our troubled world  
and our troubled lives  
clutter our minds.

# Jigsaw Therapy

Vivian Fransen

So much uncertainty  
amid the turmoil.  
So much to learn about persistence  
when our world is falling to pieces.  
We plod along.

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Howard, "Christ The Tiger" (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1967), 7.

## The Dish

Patrice M. Bavos

Only an hour earlier I'd been gazing at hints of light entering my room. This daily ritual towards a small window aligns itself with the holiness of yet another miraculous beginning.

So how does a moment of sheer joy tumble into a vortex of exhaustion and guilt?

Every day, my son Christian is up by 4:30 a.m. I begin to tense from the thud of heavy walking and monotone sounds coming from the floor above. By 5:00 a.m., he has gathered his clothes, showered, and returned upstairs for a second round of repetitive behaviors commonly known in the special needs world as "stimming." With eyes fixed and flailing arms, he walks rigidly across the room. This "Frankenstein-like" walk has been going on since the age of three. He too, is preparing for *his* day.

As my calm starts to fray, the basket begins to fill up with all the work, therapies, supplements, research, reading, hoping ... and we're still here.

"You look nice today and your hair smells good, too!" I say to Christian while entering the kitchen.

"Thanks, Mom."

"How about you make eggs today? C'mon I'll show you."

"No, Mom. I'll make my snack."

Thankful for his contribution, I say okay. Then, "Christian, can you get the small dish with the fruit on it?"

Minutes later, I hear "Oops!" as a dish hits the floor. I evenly ask, "Did it break?"

Days earlier, I had been thinking about that dish. A gift from my sister, it was the perfect size for two hard boiled eggs, a peeled orange, or a handful of nuts.

## The Dish (cont'd)

Patrice M. Bavos

“It didn’t break, Mom, it’s on this side,” he says as he shows me the large chip on the bottom.

“That’s okay. We can still use it.” I turn it over to find another large chip on the rim. “No, we definitely can’t use it for food, but I’ll find another use for it.”

This crashing moment rode in tandem with the impermanence of all things. Love the dish, it too will be gone someday.

Looking at the scattered chips on the floor I say, “Christian, get the dustpan and brush and pick this up, please.”

Eyes rolling, he grinds out a long “Ahhhhh.”

In disbelief, I let out a long, winding scream while lambasting him for not understanding *my feelings*. “Make your own breakfast!” I yell while plucking an egg from the boiled water and run it under cool water. “Here, you peel it!” I add, slamming it on the counter.

He says nothing and calmly throws it in the garbage. *I’ve got to show him love before he leaves.*

So, how *does* this work? The emotional residue from his eighteenth pandemic style birthday, the angst of guardianship, my mom’s death, our country, and over the years, a list of things I cherished, destroyed by a child who could not help himself. This and more, all culminating into one ferocious scream, added to the guilt of damaging my son, again.

“Christian, accidents happen, it’s okay. It was your attitude that made me upset.”

I can hear readers say, “All teenagers behave like that, especially boys.” This may be true, but everything relating to a special needs child is one hundredfold, including the sadness, worry, and sense of loss touching every crevice of your being.

## **The Dish (cont'd)**

Patrice M. Bavos

I hold him tight and twice kiss his cheeks. “Okay, love, I’ll see you when you get home.”

Returning to the kitchen, I find everything in order, including the stove turned off. I realize I hadn’t turned it off, Christian must have. I am blown away by this flash of normalcy.

After school, I tell him how proud I am of how he handled the morning “situation.”

“Yeah, Mom, you shouldn’t have done that.”

“You’re absolutely right, Christian.”

With every step of awareness, each in our own way moves closer, closer to Love—chips and all.

# **Crayola**

Kim A. Crumrine

Crayons in my hand  
When I was born, I was told  
She believed in me

## Peace on Earth

Lisa H. Napolitan

“Frank, I’m tired. Please. Just give me ten minutes peace. Please,” she pleaded. The tip of Carol’s nose burned a hard, shiny pink in the frosty air and the edges of her nostrils, cold and hot at the same time, dripped water as if shedding their own tears. He’d followed her out to the sidewalk in front of his parents’ home wearing just his sweater, his Florsheims slipping on the snow-crusted walk.

Carol gripped her leather gloves around the handle of the bright blue Silver Cross pram, one of two just acquired Christmas gifts from Mom and Dad Murphy, and pushed through the increasingly thick dusting of snow. Seemed her boots had been a good idea after all, adding some traction, though her stockinged legs numbed in the paralyzing evening air.

The pram’s red Christmas bow dangled limply atop the canopy as the vehicle’s oversized wheels navigated miniature snow mounds created by earlier walkers. The infant Lori Lynn’s eyes jiggled in their sockets with each bumpy disturbance. It unnerved Carol that her baby was glaring up at her with such intensity when she knew she looked a wreck.

“You know you’re making a real scene.” Frank was right behind Carol, good and annoyed now.

“Just go inside, Frank. Oh, my God. I can’t breathe.”

“Because it’s freezing out here.”

“No. No. Because I can’t breathe in *there*.” She swore if he got any closer, she would push him, make him outright slip on the goddam walkway. “Oh, my Lord. Just leave.”

Maybe it was her utter lack of interest in the topic of her sister-in-law’s prattling. Some paper-thin model named Twiggy popping up on every magazine cover, making it virtually impossible for the average woman to keep up. Or maybe it was changing that umpteenth overloaded Pamper, squeezing the

## Peace on Earth (cont'd)

Lisa H. Napolitan

damn thing into the already-too-full garbage can outside the endlessly open kitchen door where the exterior's bitter blast smacked up against the combusting interior making Carol unsure whether to grab a sweater or strip down to her panties. No, she knew what it was. It was that stinking lousy card from Ruth. That's what had pushed her over the edge. Brought it all to a boil tonight. That's what had thrown Carol into this state. She'd been expecting it, the holiday card: neither Christmas-themed nor Hanukkah, but wintry and artistic, always artistic. It killed Carol. Ruth didn't have an artistic bone in her body, and yet always sent the nicest, most interesting cards. Bought in the city, no doubt. Carol recognized the artist right away. Girard. Alexander Girard. She'd tagged his work once, taken his coat for him and gotten him coffee, back when she worked, when she had a life. Green letters on white that said in the simple, new, pop art style, "Peace on Earth." Well, la de da. When was the last time Carol had gotten to go into the city? With the four kids now, a trip to her beloved MOMA may as well of been a trip to the moon.

But it was this part of the note that really drove the knife in; these words scrawled into the card that really finished Carol off. "Just completed my dissertation, 'Escaping Plato's Cave: A Theory of Personal Harmony.' Here I go, dear friend! I'm on my way to professorship!" It was enough to drive Carol into a fit if apocalyptic proportion.

"My mother gave you her cookbook, Carol, and you say nothing? You get up and leave?" He marched behind her, his breath billowing like some cartoon character on a morning TV show. Like Magilla Gorilla or something. She was sure that if she turned around, she'd smell the gravy on his breath, the red wine, the garlic, all in that big, white cloud. "Wonderful impression. Just wonderful," he said. And then he swooped his bare hand into the snow, compacted a snowball and whipped it at the nearby stop sign. The ball hit the sign with a dull clang, leaving a mark between the S and the T. "You know the kids are screaming in

## Peace on Earth (cont'd)

Lisa H. Napolitan

there. They want to eat.” Carol stopped walking. “What do you want?”

Well...” She took a moment and felt herself on the verge of tears. “I don’t want a goddam cookbook, that’s for sure.”

Frank’s eyes ducked around to see if anyone was nearby. “Watch your mouth,” he said all self-consciously. Some kids across the street were making a sad looking snowman with too little snow, though the snow was picking up, becoming steadier. It would be a tough ride home.

“What do you want, Frank? What do you want me to do?”

“Me? I...I want you to come inside and thank my parents for dinner, for their gifts. I want you to take care of our kids and sit down and eat dinner. Is that too much to ask?” His eyes were softer now, confused, hopeful but wary.

Carol looked at the snow that clung to the stop sign. It appeared to have no interest in falling off.

“That’s what you want?” she said.

There were three sets of eyes locked in a triangle, all in wait for the answer to this very simple question, and one was very small and peering out from the carriage.

“I want you to come inside. That’s all. It’s Christmas Eve, for Christ’s sake.”

The water dripped from Carol’s nose. It ran in a thin trickle down her lip. She wiped at it with her glove.

“It’s what you want,” she said.

“Yes.”

She looked into his eyes thinking, *but what do I want? Ask me again. What do I want really?* but said nothing. She then turned and looked into the eyes of her baby Lori Lynn. *What do you*

## Peace on Earth (cont'd)

Lisa H. Napolitan

want? Of course, only the baby could hear it. Mothers do that, with their eyes. And if you ask them, they will tell you that the youngest of children actually do understand.

Frank, in his sweater vest and short sleeves, (*why short sleeves, Frank?*), is shivering in his inadequate outfit. In a gesture that was both take-charge and uncertain, he helped Carol turn the pram around, and they retraced their steps back up the walk to the house. A horseshoe shape of snow had gathered behind the collar of his shirt. Before they entered, Carol removed a glove and pulled the collection of snow out, tossing it away with a series of small, emotionless flicks. The tiny collection of flakes blurred and disappeared somewhere amidst the rest of the falling snow.

“Hand me the baby, Carol. Come. Come get some ham.”

After dinner, the kids clamored for Carol’s attention, and the women discussed whether the coffee should be prepared at night or in the morning, and Carol thought of the card from Ruth.

Frank gave Carol good quality modeling clay for Christmas.

“When am I supposed to find time for that,” she said, breaking the clay into three more or less equal chunks and handing them to each of her older children to do with as they pleased. She then picked up the baby and left the room, ascending the staircase on her way to putting the infant down for bed.

In the morning, she will unwrap the chunks of clay and teach each child, as they sit at the kitchen table, how to create a dragon for Darren, a puppy dog for Cristof, and for Joan, a magician’s magic wand.

## Free Cutz

Amenazeb Khan

I can imagine the headline: “Lunatic woman with awful bowl-haircut massacres a salon full of hairdressers.”

“A clean cut, right girls?” The platinum blonde with bubble-gum pink nails who turned me into a child’s nightmare says with a strained smile.

I am holding my breath, which is making my face turn red. I am slowly taking on the look of a pink balloon with a brown bowl on its head.

“A free cut, right, so like, not that bad, right?” She says, stepping back from me, the scissors still clutched in her hand. I can hear her stepping on my precious brown locks. I know they are screaming in outrage.

I curse and throw off the black apron she tied around my neck while thanking me for volunteering to get a free cut and reassuring me she was not a newbie.

I say nothing to any of the staff, just glare daggers at all of them. Everyone else waiting in line behind me for their “free cutz” hurry after me into the street, except for a smiling Asian woman with her horrified nine-year-old, who is forced into the seat I fled from. I am sure it is still warm from my sore and unhappy backside. I want to shout like a mad woman, “Run, run while you can! Save yourselves!”

“Uh,” a young man in a cap says as I stand in the street, my purse held limply in my hands. I am unsure of what to do or where to go. I had hoped to show up at my ex-roommate’s engagement party with an edgy new pixie cut. An attempt at non-verbally telling all those people I graduated with that I was okay and happy.

“Uh, so maybe you wanna come to our lil shop. Like, I’ll fix that for free,” the man in the cap begins, and I flinch away from him, holding my purse up between us.

## Free Cutz (cont'd)

Amenazeb Khan

“No, no, chill. See that bro there? I just did his hair. I’ll do like a fade, you know, and I can do a design in your hair?”

“Why?” I say, my voice strangled. I am certain I look as de-ranked as Lee from Naruto on a bad day.

“Cause that bubble gum popping B is my ex, and she should not be allowed near a pair of scissors. Come on. Come in and have a drink of water, at least. You don’t look so good.”

I gasp, patting my poor hair and glaring at him as my eyes brim with tears.

“No, no! I mean, you look pale!”

I suck in a breath as I step into his barber shop and drop into a vacant chair. The men in the shop stare at me in horror, and I let out a wail of despair before bursting into tears.

After watching the tattooed gentleman in the shop cut hair for several people, I consent to the haircut. I agree with the fade and the flower pattern on the right side. I cry a river as the electric trimmer eats my precious hair, anxious and terrified of the final result.

It’s not until I am staring into the mirror at what looks like a bad-ass B with no F’s to give, that my terror evaporates. I cry again anyway. I hug all the muscled men, kiss the man in the cap, sweep into the street, and flip off the barbie in the other shop who tried to destroy my life before sauntering off.

“Take that, Jennifer!” I shout as I skip to my car, ready to conquer a party full of vicious alumni who will ask me all the questions I do not want to be asked.

## Long Shadows

Maureen Lanagan Haggerty

I don't care if it is eighteen degrees,  
after days of cloudy fifties  
this morning the sky is robin-egg blue,  
the sun is brilliant,  
casting long shadows of the pin oak across the snow,  
the neighbor's squirrel is searching for a breakfast  
hidden in late autumn,  
the air is still.  
But inside  
sunlight floods my living room,  
touches the plaid throw on the rocker,  
my sister's watercolor of her Vermont cabin  
set deep in the snow,  
feels just right—  
there in the corner near the front door  
where a sunbeam settles.

## Forbidden Fruit

R. Kate Cutts

Slippery roads lay beneath us, and icy sleet comes at us, as I cling to the dash or the door alternately. My husband is a seasoned, bad-weather, NJ driver, but we are in unfamiliar territory in Richmond, Virginia. He holds our little Honda on the road as we fly through deserted streets trying to keep up with the sedan in front of us. I turn and ask my brother in the backseat, “You alright?” He nods. His future as a naval aviator requires immunity to motion sickness, but I check anyway. “And this guy we are following was your driver’s ed teacher?” Dan laughs but I urge caution. We have to keep Dwight in sight, or we won’t find our way from the church to the reception. It would not be good for a groomsman to go missing.

Later, we meet our friends in the center hall of an elegant historic manor on a Richmond Street where you can feel the history pour into your veins. I expect to hear Patrick Henry’s ghost whispering “. . . liberty or death . . .” in my ear from across town. As if the rich red carpets, perfectly polished period furnishings, and elegant crystal chandeliers are not enough, the mansion is decorated Williamsburg style for the Christmas holidays. We are ushered through a carved-molding arched door into a side parlor and enjoy the company of dear friends we don’t see as often as we wish. I stand near the marble fireplace and examine the miniature Christmas tree made of apples and magnolia leaves. *Yes, it’s a fresh live apple.* A slightly ornery thought enters my mind and I blink at myself in the gilded mirror. “Who might take a bite from this forbidden fruit?” I laugh and dare the men in my party. My husband and brother shake their heads and move away. They think it might be funny but are not willing to risk the wrath of the immaculate southern woman seeing to the details of the event. “Where’s Bob? He would do it.” My brother spreads word of my evil desire.

A suit steps forward, volunteering his teeth to my cause. Brent is a very funny guy, but more mildly mannered than to be looking for this kind of mischief. “Sure, I’ll do it.” I think he’s joking to

## Forbidden Fruit (cont'd)

R. Kate Cutts

make me laugh, but before I can regret my dare he leans on the mantle, tilts his head, and snacks off a huge hunk of apple. He chews while we all giggle. Someone snaps a shot of the ruined ornamental pome. Our growing guffaws cause a little stir in this section of the Victorian house, and we view a shocked butler turning to go find the matron. My stomach sinks with dread like a fifth grader on the verge of getting sent to the principal's office. "Maybe we could turn the tree around so the bite doesn't show?" But the mirror behind it would reveal the naked truth of our bitten apple. *Why, oh why did I let the serpent in my head take control of my mouth?*

Like a fairy godmother, Miss Carolyn appears. Our mentor, friend, and frequent fixer is problem solving at the speed of light. "Oh, you guys are too much!" she scolds in between loving giggles. She slides the apple off its post and flips it around so the bite goes onto the spike, and smooth red skin is all the viewer sees.

The matron enters the parlor, scans us hooligans with a piercing gaze, while the butler nods toward the apple cone in question. She makes a slow circumnavigation of the room, pauses at the mantle, and looks at the apple cone from all sides. The missing chunk is hidden cleverly, and I thank heaven for Miss Carolyn saving our skins. The elegant southern hostess exits our room and I breathe for the first time since she began her examination. Could she see the flush of embarrassment on my cheeks that proclaimed my guilt? She and the butler couldn't put us on the hook today, but when she dismantles her decorations at the end of the season, the mystery will be revealed—and I will be many miles away!

## **Midlife's Slumber**

Dana Faulkner

Warm milk and glasses  
Great books rest on the nightstand  
She would rather dream

# Home

Amenazeb Khan

Home is your mother's womb, where you swam and danced  
Where you knew true warmth  
Where you were safe  
Where you were cherished

Home is where you took your first eager breath of the world  
A land of long, hot summers  
A fertile valley that smells of wood smoke and freshly turned soil  
Where your tribe's people have lived and loved and fought

Home is a towering skyscraper in a foreign city  
A box in the sky  
Voices you don't understand  
Words you can't comprehend  
It is crying for your grandmother, not understanding that she is  
unreachable,  
Across continents, beyond a vast ocean

Home is a rented apartment too small for seven bodies  
It is five pairs of little hands clasped together  
It is five bodies hiding under a heavy blanket in the unending  
rains of a New Jersey Spring  
It is hopscotch and skipping rope, and snow fights  
It is a robin-egg blue house in a cul-de-sac full of immigrants

Home is your lover's warmth wrapped around you  
It is a kiss that tastes like a prayer  
It is your heart willingly tangled with another's  
It is finding a place in the world where your soul feels at peace

Home is the blank canvas that welcomes me  
It is a brush loaded with vibrant color  
It is stroke upon endless stroke of paint  
It is creating something beautiful,  
Becoming something beautiful

## **Home (cont'd)**

Amenazeb Khan

Home is your reflection

It is that person you see with no filter

It is that spirit that aches for greatness

It is that wild urge to be yourself, to accept yourself

# Ferrying

Laura Daniels

Peaks Island, Maine, is my place of *hiraeth*, a Welsh word that describes the blending of homesickness, nostalgia, and longing in a liminal spot that feels both old and new. *Hiraeth* pulls at my heart, telling me that in Maine, I've found something I thought I'd irretrievably lost.

Each time I wait for the ferry, I wonder, "Will I be able to capture again that childlike feeling of discovery that sparked my senses the first time I set foot on the island?"

Maybe the breezy salty air and sunny robin's egg blue sky made it special that first day. Perhaps it was the relaxing bike ride around the island, a skill I hadn't used since high school. Maybe it was the lobster roll and ice-cold beer on the deck overlooking the sandy beach filled with kayaks and paddleboards. It's become my place to escape, relax, and find myself.

Peaks Island, in Casco Bay, is accessible by a forty-five-minute boat ride. A commuter ferry travels there from Portland at regular intervals. I sit and wait with the other riders, bikers, cars, and provisions. My heartbeat quickens as the ferry approaches its dock slip.

The ferry pirouettes, gently turning itself around before the final approach to the dock. The back of the boat inches up as the diesel engine roars in reverse. The rattling of rusty chains signals the lowering of the drawbridge from the boat to the dock. The ferry must empty first before refilling can begin.

First off are furniture, cheese, and crafts made on the island. Tiny forklifts approach and pick up each skid of goods, delivering it safely to the warehouse. This back-and-forth beeping gear-shifting dance continues until the unloading is over.

Next up, the car engines engage. The scullers, a more inclusive title than ferrymen, act as conductors guiding each car, first to the right, then to the left, off the boat, and onto the dock. Once all the cars are removed, the bikers and walkers are set free.

## Ferrying (cont'd)

Laura Daniels

Now that the ferry is empty, the reloading process begins. Provisions needed on the island are brought on board. All types of things are required to sustain life on an island - books, newspapers, appliances, food, drink - everything up and down Maslow's Pyramid. The tiny forklifts appear dockside for a repeat performance.

Next up, the waiting cars are shepherded one by one into the ferry's hull, one to the right, one to the left.

Bikers and walkers are loaded last. I walk up the dock's gang-plank and hand my roundtrip ticket to the sculler. No ticket is required to leave the island.

The engine rumbles. The horn blasts signaling our departure.

It's a nice day, so I head up two flights to the open-air top deck. The front seat by the red railing is always the first to be grabbed. There are shady and sunny spots. I seek out the shade.

The first deck is enclosed, cooled in the summer, and warmed in the winter. It has all the luxuries of home—including bathrooms and snacks—a nice place to ride in rough seas or stormy weather.

Once the trip gets underway, excitement crackles in the air as the ferry makes a sharp left turn into the channel. It passes the fishing dock and the seals that pop their shiny black heads up in random spots, as if they are saying, ahoy matey!

On the right, giant white fuel-holding tanks hug the shore. At times oil tankers can be spotted offloading their fuel. A black silicone bladder surrounds the ship so no oil can escape into the bay.

Along the way, a rainbow of colored lobster buoys cluster together to create a navigational path from port to port.

Fort Gorges, an abandoned island used during the Civil War, is ahead on the left. Its grassed roof reflects the neglect it has seen

## Ferrying (cont'd)

Laura Daniels

over the years. It's surrounded by water and isolated. Getting there takes strength and endurance. I've dreamed of kayaking to it. Many have tried and succeeded. And many have tried and failed and got picked up by the Coast Guard or nearby fishermen. I'm afraid I'd fall into the latter category, so it remains a dream.

Next up on the right is House Island, which has a single white colonial-style mansion with black shutters and a wraparound porch. There are a few outer buildings, maybe garages and barns. It's common to pass by on the weekend and see tents erected and a party in full swing. The only way on or off the island is by private boat. Trespassers are not welcome.

Then Peaks Island is in sight. I feel the engine slowing down and my heart speeding up. No matter how often I make the trip, the sign greeting me at the dock makes me smile. I have many photos of that red and white metal banner hanging from the green hydraulic drawbridge towers. It reads simply, "PEAKS ISLAND," and its familiarity is like a welcoming hug.

As the ferry's brakes are applied, and the engine is idled, a rustling begins as items are gathered and all prepare to depart. It's time to start the next leg of the journey. Some passengers are arriving home from work, others home from shopping, visiting a friend, or going to dinner. I wonder if anyone else is starting a vacation.

I hurry off on foot, eager to begin a new adventure on my piece of paradise.

## About Our Authors

### **Patrice M. Bavos**

Patrice has lived in the Washington Park Historic district of North Plainfield, New Jersey since 1992. She has been self-employed her entire working career, owning and managing a printing & design company for twenty years, being the sole artist and designer for her stationery and night light lines, owning a thrift store/art gallery combo, and working in elder care for seven years before retiring in 2020.

Her sense of wonder continues to ignite her love of writing, painting, and assemblage.

Patrice shares her home with her remarkable son with special needs and three rascal cats.

Things she hates? *Injustice, hypocrisy, disingenuousness, and vacuum cleaners with cords.*

### **Kim A. Crumrine**

Kim is a picture book writer/illustrator and the artist and owner of the card company Water Street Design ([etsy.com/shop/waterstreetdesign](https://www.etsy.com/shop/waterstreetdesign)). Her first picture book will be published by *Minibombo* in early 2024. Her cards can also be found in retail stores such as Just Jersey in Morristown, and Paper Source. Kim's favorite causes are supporting her local library, environmental protection, and animal rescue through her art donations. She is grateful for the encouragement, support, and education she has received from Women Who Write.

## About Our Authors

### R. Kate Cutts

Kate is a writer and voice actor following a rewarding career as a teacher of the gifted. She has published both short stories and essays and is currently writing a novel. She holds a master's degree in instructional technology and lives and works on her family's cranberry farm. Kate appears in Ocean Spray's "Act Tiny, Be Mighty"™ television commercial campaign. Visit her website at [KateCutts.com](http://KateCutts.com).

### Laura Daniels

Laura writes for adults and children. She is the founder of the Facebook blog "The Fringe 999," which publishes daily and welcomes members to share their creative endeavors. Laura has recently published in the *Visible Ink Anthology*, *New Jersey Bards Anthology*, *Wingless Dreamer Dulce Poetica Anthology*, *Silver Birch Press*, *Lothlorien Poetry Journal*, and *Smarty Pants Magazine for Kids*. She is an active member of Women Who Write and can be found on Instagram at @thefringe999. Her writing explores transformation, nature, and slice of life. Laura lives with her family in Mount Arlington, New Jersey.

### Bari Ecker

Bari is a retired family therapist and an active member of Women Who Write. She participates in the Jersey Girls Poetry Critique Group. Her work has appeared in *Moving Forward: Stories of Courage and Strength*, *The Anthologist: Rutgers Literary Magazine*, *Sensations Magazine*, and *More* magazine. Bari and her husband of forty-eight years live in Morristown and love spending time with their five grandsons.

## About Our Authors

### **Dana Faulkner**

Dana is interested in making the mundane magical and vice versa using just a pencil, a notebook, and a smile.

### **Vivian Fransen**

Vivian, a longtime Women Who Write member who is part of the Just Write Group, writes nonfiction, poetry, and short stories. She is a published author with her book titled *The Straight Spouse: A Memoir* (published by Open Door Publications, 2017). Visit her book's website at [straightpousememoir.com](http://straightpousememoir.com) for more details.

### **Amenazeb Khan**

Amenazeb is a Pashtun-American writer and artist living in her ancestral village in the mountains of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. She loves gardening, painting, writing for long hours, and playing with different art media in her lovely little office overlooking the mountains. She writes poetry, prose, and creative nonfiction. She is currently working on a collection of stories based on Pashtun village life.

### **Kathy Kane**

Kathy is a writer, an Amherst Writers and Artists workshop leader, a creativity coach, and a book midwife. She works with women in midlife who have books to birth.

Kathy spent thirty plus years in a successful career in financial services before rediscovering her creativity. She now works with others to help them do the same.

## About Our Authors

She lives in Morris Township, New Jersey, with her husband of thirty-six years and enjoys the gift of two stepdaughters and three grandchildren. She loves books, journals, special pens, and gardens that dream of spring and second chances.

### **Lisa H. Napolitan**

Lisa's work has appeared in *The Madison Review*, *Cafe Irreal*, *HelloHorror*, *AMP*, *Narrative Northeast*, *The Mighty Line*, *Font*, and *Avalon Literary Review*. Her short, "Destrehan," published by *Into the Void*, was nominated Best Small Fictions 2018. Lisa is currently working toward her Doctor of Letters at Drew University with a focus on writing. Her website is [lisanapolitan.com](http://lisanapolitan.com), and she can be found on Twitter at [@4amwriterlisa](https://twitter.com/@4amwriterlisa).

### **Maureen Lanagan Haggerty**

Maureen's poems have appeared in *Frogpond*, *hedgerow: a journal of small poems* (England), *Poetry Pea Journal*, *Paper Mountains*, *Haiku Society of America Members' Anthology*, *EXIT 13*, *Off the Coast*, *The Tower Poets* and *If Only You Knew*. She is a past president of Women Who Write and a founding member of Poets' Corner. Maureen's book of poetry is titled *Deeply Home*; her poems are inspired by nature and the changing of the seasons, memories of childhood and family, and Irish country life.

### **Doris Parmett**

Doris is an award-winning American author of best-selling novels, short stories, literary journals, magazines, poetry, and plays. Her first novel, "Lies," was nominated for the best book of the year by the Romance Writers of America. Her work has been recognized by the Romance Writers of America and multiple awards

## About Our Authors

from the New Jersey Writers Conference and the Romantic Times Reviewer's Choice awards.

Doris credits her love of reading to becoming a writer and an educator. Honored by the State Department of Education, she served as an Executive Board Member of the International Reading Association and was instrumental in bringing the Young Author's Program to New Jersey.

Doris is currently writing a Christmas story she'd love to see become a Hallmark movie.

### **Joan G. Reamer**

Joan, who lives in Morristown, NJ, was a member of the Tower Poets of Caldwell University in Caldwell, NJ, and contributed to their chapbook. Currently a member of Women Who Write/Poets Corner situated in Madison, NJ., her poems have been published in the literary magazines *Exit 13* and *Goldfinch*.

### **Carole Garibaldi Rogers**

Carole has been a journalist, oral historian, and poet. For more than thirty years she has published numerous articles and essays in national newspapers and magazines, including *The New York Times* and *America*. Her poetry has appeared in a variety of smallpress journals and in anthologies. Her eighth book, *Hidden Lives: My Three Grandmothers*, was published in 2013 by Serving House Books. Carole is currently working on a collection of personal essays. She lives in Morristown with her husband, Leo.

## About Our Cover Artist

### Kim A. Crumrine

Kim is a picture book writer/illustrator and the artist and owner of the card company Water Street Design ([etsy.com/shop/waterstreetdesign](https://etsy.com/shop/waterstreetdesign)). Her first picture book will be published by *Minibombo* in early 2024. Her cards can also be found in retail stores such as Just Jersey in Morristown, and Paper Source. Kim's favorite causes are supporting her local library, environmental protection, and animal rescue through her art donations. She is grateful for the encouragement, support, and education she has received from Women Who Write.

## About Our Editor

### Donna Piken

Donna writes poetry, fiction, and memoir. She is a longtime member of Women Who Write and coordinator of the Livingston Mixed Genre group. She served four years on the editorial staff of *Goldfinch* before being elected editor-in-chief. After completing her first novel manuscript, Donna is currently working on a memoir and a collection of poetry.

Now retired, Donna is a former teacher, early childhood specialist, educational business consultant, and founder of Donna's Kids & Co., a children's arts enrichment center. Her mixed media art and photography has been featured locally in juried shows and in *The Writers Circle Journal* issue 5. She is also proud to have her work on the covers of *Goldfinch* volumes 21 and 24.

## About Us

Women Who Write, Inc. began in June 1988 as a single writing group called Mothers Who Write. Today, we are a regional women writers' organization and nonprofit corporation with writing groups that meet in-person throughout New Jersey and online, with participants joining from diverse locations both within and outside the state.

Any woman who writes may join Women Who Write, Inc. Our members include writers of short and long fiction, poetry, plays, journalism, essays, memoir, science, mystery, history, romance, and children's literature. Some are award-winning professionals who publish regularly; others write mainly for pleasure and self-discovery. We support each writer in establishing and meeting personal objectives.

### **Officers:**

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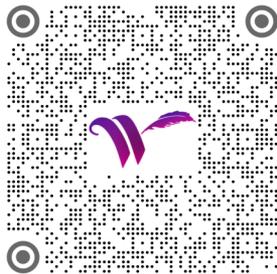
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